

UDC 101.1

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**NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS “THE OTHER”/
“THE STRANGER”. THE TWO FACES OF CONTEMPORARY
BULGARIAN SOCIETY**

The article discusses the challenges posed to Bulgaria by the new global age of intensive mobility, exceptional dynamism of social processes and the large-scale transformations that are changing the meaning of national borders, abolishing the enclosure of nations and cultures, and creating a new social order. In response to the transformations taking place in the role and place of the nation state in postmodern society, national identity is naturally evolving. Based on empirical data obtained from a national representative social survey, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews carried out under the project “Measures for Overcoming the Demographic Crisis in Bulgaria”, the article analyzes how the shift in the understanding of the national community – from a value defined in relation to inviolable national sovereignty, to a more open perspective, where cooperation, mutual interest, cultural uniqueness and the co-experiencing of otherness become dominant - leads to changes in the national identity towards the formation of elements of a supranational European identity, where the co-experiencing of otherness becomes central. The second part of the article deals with Bulgarian society’s attitude towards “otherness”, or how the trends of formation of a supranational identity, which imposes the principles of compatibility and the coexistence of differences, relates to the attitudes of Bulgarian citizens to the “new others”, i.e., the refugees/migrants, who have been crossing our borders ever more frequently in recent years, and some of whom remain in Bulgaria, for longer or shorter periods of time, although generally in transit to Western Europe.

Keywords: national identity, migration, the other/ the stranger, attitudes, coexperiencing of otherness.

Introduction

The world we live in today is marked by accelerated social time, an exceptional dynamism of social processes and large-scale changes. A number of scholars (philosophers, theosophists, sociologists, cultural scientists, ethnographers, etc.) have developed the idea that at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, humankind entered into a new type of civilization. Zygmunt Bauman believes the new reality is most aptly defined by the term “liquid modernity”¹. Mobility, change, are asserted as the basic characteristics of the new epoch. The transformation of traditional institutions, the growing importance of mobility, together with technological development, is changing the importance of national borders, is eliminating the enclosure of nations and cultures, and is creating a new social order. And if in the past, the nation state was an instrument for protecting the liberty and independence of autonomous peoples and nations, today this instrument works with increasing difficulty in the face of the complex interdependencies that characterize the modern age. In this connection, however, the question arises as to how far the individual and group consciousness has developed so as to correspond to the modern condition of interconnectedness and mutual dependency. Another topical question refers to the fact that, along with the international

¹ Bauman, Z. 2000. Liquid Modernity. Polity Press, Malden, MA, USA;

Bauman, Z. 2007. Liquid Times. Living in an Age of Uncertainty. Polity Press, Malden, MA, USA.

dimensions of business, finance, trade and information, along with the trends of integration and mutual dependence, the reverse process is also operating: that of localization and attachment to locality; we observe outbursts of collective identity that, in the name of cultural uniqueness, question globalization. In fact, in our time, mobility proves to be an distributed good, which is quickly becoming a powerful factor determining the character of modern societies. All this raises the question as to the changes taking place in the national identity in the age of supermobility.

In response to the changing role and place of the national state in postmodern society, national identity is naturally evolving; new types of identities are emerging, which are structurally and functionally different from the earlier ones, which corresponded to previous axiological dimensions. After Bulgaria became part of the European Union, this change may be represented in terms of a changing image of the national community – from a value defined in relation to the inviolability of national sovereignty, this image is shifting to a more open perspective in which the prevalent factors are cooperation, mutual interest, cultural uniqueness and the co-experiencing of otherness. Statehood, as constituting national identity, is increasingly losing its value and turning into a technical element of the mutual relations between various communities; i.e., its identifying coordinates are changing. These processes express what M. Castells¹ defines as the fundamental crisis of a legitimizing identity ensuing from the weakening role of the nation-state as a basic source of legitimacy.

On the other hand, mass migration is a kind of expression of the mobility typical of the new epoch. As a characteristic of the modern age, it leads to many significant changes in the way of life in a multicultural environment and is linked to the fact that coexistence in near proximity to “others”, to people “different from us”, is increasingly becoming a coexistence with “strangers”. Bauman, in his *Postmodern Ethics*², discusses the new figure of the “stranger-neighbor”, which emerged as a result of globalization, and the new forms of multicultural coexistence that figure engenders”. Bauman stresses the fact that, while in the premodern world, “neighbor” and “stranger” were two different categories, and the stranger was not a neighbor, i.e., was not in physical or social proximity in the framework of man’s lifeworld, and could enter it only in the guise of an enemy, or a guest, or a future neighbor who is expected to accept and adopt the rules of local coexistence, in the postmodern world, strangers are increasingly often neighbors living in immediate proximity and not separated from us by borders. But while for the neighbor, there are established rules of communication and coexistence, such rules are lacking with regard to the stranger. That is why, in this new situation, the question arises as to how we can coexist with difference that it is perceptibly present as the “strange”, and how we can live together without destroying and rejecting the identity of the stranger who is different.

Growing numbers of migrants have been arriving in Europe in recent years (including in Bulgaria), fleeing from wars, persecutions, terrorism and hunger. The issue of foreigners, increasingly defined as the “new others”, the “aliens”, “the superfluous people”, is almost constantly at the center of the European political debate. Although Immanuel Kant, in his book *Perpetual Peace*³ developed the idea of a universal hospitality as early as 1795, asserting the right of every foreigner not to be treated with hostility by the people he has gone to, in the new situation of today, the meeting of different cultures, of different civilizational, religious, and

¹ Castells, M. 2009. The Power of Identity. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Vol. 2, Wiley-Blackwell; 2nd Edition.

² Bauman, Z. 1993. Postmodern Ethics. Wiley-Blackwell; 1 edition.

³ Kant, I. 2007. Perpetual Peace. FQ Classics.

secular values is increasingly creating tension and leading to rejection rather than hospitality and compassion. Thus, even though the coexperiencing of otherness, cooperation with the other, lies at the core of the new identities, the European citizens, including the Bulgarians, are in fact afraid of the unknown that arises when they meet with other people who are “strange” to them, and hence dangerously unpredictable; interaction with them may in some cases be metaphorically defined as a “clash of civilizations” (in Huntington’s term ¹), rather than a coexperiencing of otherness.

From identity as a primordial given, to identity as a relative social construct: the evolution of ideas about identity

Identity, as a complex, dynamic category that constantly changes over time and space depending on the context in which it is considered, is one of the most intensely debated research problems in the social sciences and humanities. Since the middle of the 20th century, the forms of identity and the processes of identification (ethnic, religious, local, regional, cultural, national, supranational) have been the object of analysis within the framework of the theories of ethnicity and nations, and have been studied mostly through the approaches of primordialism², instrumentalism³, social constructivism⁴, ethnosymbolism⁵. It is impossible not to mention the debate on the development of national identity based on common origin, language and territory, or the *attachments* discussed by C. Geertz ⁶, or the ethnonational symbols referred to by A. Smith (the national flag, currency, hymn, monuments and ceremonies), which recall the common cultural legacy and kinship⁷, or the idea of national identity as a “mobile” social construct of the nation, which represents an “imagined community”, as defined by B. Anderson⁸. In fact, the development of these theoretical approaches to the study of identity reflects the gradual evolution of the understanding of this phenomenon, its consistent relativization and subjectivization. And while initially, in the framework of the *primordialist paradigm*, identity was viewed as a primordial, initial given

¹ Huntington, S. 2011. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Simon & Schuster.

² Shils, E. 1957. Primordial, personal, sacred and civil ties. *British Journal of Sociology*, 8, 2, 130-145; Connor, W. 1978. A nation is a nation, is a state, is an ethnic group, is a ... *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1, 377-400; Greely, A. 1974. *Ethnicity in the United States: A Preliminary Reconnaissance*. New York: Wiley; Smith, A. 1981. *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Van Berghe, P. 1981. *The Ethnic phenomenon*. New York: Elsevier; Halsey, A.H. 1978. *Ethnicity: a primordial bond?* *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1, 1, 124-128.

³ Bell, D. 1996. *The Cultural Contradictions Of Capitalism*. Basic Books, Anniversary edition.

⁴ Hechter, M. 1974. The political economy of ethnic change. *American Journal of Sociology*, 79, 5, 1151-78; Mitchell, J.C. 1974. Perceptions of ethnicity and ethnic behavior. An empirical exploration. In: A. Cohen (ed.) *Urban Ethnicity*. London: Tavistock; Nagata, J. 1974. What is a Malay? Situational selection of ethnic identity in a plural society. *American Ethnologist*, 1,2, 331-350; Epstein, A. 1978. *Ethnos and Identity*. London: Tavistock; Okamura, J. 1981. Situational ethnicity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 4, 4, 452-465; Brass, P. 1991. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. New Delhi: Sage; Brubaker, R. 1996. *Nationalism Reframed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁵ Smith, A. 1991. *National Identity*. London: Penguin; Armstrong J. 1982. *Nations before Nationalism*. University of North Carolina Press; Hutchinson, J., A. A. Smith (eds.) 1994. *Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Hutchinson, J. 1994. *Modern Nationalism*. London: Fontana Press.

⁶ Geertz, C. 1963. The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States. In: C. Geertz (ed.) *Old Societies and New States*. New York: The Free Press.

⁷ Smith, A. 1991. *National Identity*. London: Penguin.

⁸ Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso.

that serves as a constant definer of people and nations¹, the first breakthrough in the primordialist cannon was made by the theories of E. Renan and M. Weber², who took a step towards asserting the understanding of identity as a subjective construct of the social imagination, and hence made it a stretchable category instead of an invariable and static structure. The *instrumentalists* (D. Bell) continue the tradition of asserting the relativity of identity inasmuch as identity is not viewed by them as a primeval phenomenon but as a strategic choice persons make, as an instrument to protect group interests, as a dynamic, changing phenomenon that combines sustainability and historical changeability. For their part, the *constructivists* maintain the tendency of conceiving identity as a social construct based on established representations and feelings in a certain cultural environment, a construct that allows the individual to enter or exit various communities, creating thereby a dynamic identity for himself. The *modernists* (E. Gellner, B. Anderson, E. Hobsbawm) continue the established tendency of viewing identity as a historical product that is historically determined, so that, according to them, any attempt to establish objective criteria for the definition of national identity is doomed to fail.

The ideas of Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper³ continue the increasingly asserted tendency of relativizing the content of identity and seeing it mostly as changeable, flexible, rather than static. In this connection, they attempt to distinguish *identity* from *identification*. According to them, the term “identity” is etymologically charged with the semantic meaning of “*state/condition*” and does not match the modern understanding of identity as a process characterized by elasticity, dynamics, changeability. That is why they believe a more appropriate term would be “*identification*”, which suggests a process.

Since the 1990s, under conditions of globalization, the borderlines dividing nations and ethnic groups have become thinner and permeable, and cultural interaction has become more intensive; hence, research interest has since then been aimed at defining *multiple* or *hybrid identity* in the framework of the concepts of *cultural pluralism* or *multiculturalism*⁴. The growing migration trends have led to new phenomena and processes, and respectively to the elaboration of new theoretical frameworks for their study such as *transnationalism* and *methodological nationalism*⁵.

¹ Smith, A. D., 1994, Culture: Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism, Workshop of Ethnicity and International Relations, 23-24 Nov. 1994.

[<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:uOJt5JaLQ7EJ:repository.forcedmigration.org/pdf/%3Fpid%3Dfmo:1504+&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=bg&client=firefox-b-abl>].

² Weber, M. 1985. Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Fünfte, revidierte Auflage, Besorgt von Johannes Winkelmann, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen.

³ Brubaker, R., F. Cooper. 2000. Beyond Identity. Theory and Society, February 2000, Volume 29, Issue 1

⁴ Weinreich, P. 1991. Ethnic Identities and Indigenous Psychologies in Pluralist Societies. In: ***Psychology and Developing Societies***. Vol. 3(1), 73-92; Taylor, Ch. et al. 1994. Multiculturalism. Examining the Politics of Recognition. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Weinreich, P., Luk, C.L., Bond, M. 1996. Ethnic Stereotyping and Identification in a Multicultural Context: Acculturation, Self-Esteem and Identity Diffusion in Hong Kong Chinese University Students. In: ***Psychology and Developing Societies***. Vol.8(1), 107-169; Caglar, A. S. 1997. Hyphenated identities and the limits of ‘culture’. In: T. Modood and P. Werbner (eds). The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe, London: Zed, 169-85; Weinreich, P. 1998. Social Exclusion and Multiple Identities. In: ***Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture***. Vol. 9, 139-144.

⁵ Vetrovec, S. 2007. Transnationalism. London & New York: Routledge; Vetrovec, S. and R. Cohen. 1999. (Ed.) Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism. Aldershot: Edward Elgar; Bauböck, R., T. Faist (Ed.) 2010. A Global Perspective on Transnational Migration: Theorizing Migration without Methodological Nationalism. In: ***Transnationalism and Diaspora: Concepts, Theories and Methods***. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP/IMISCOE; Schiller, N. G., Wimmer, A., Levitt, P., Kumar, S. (Ed.). 2007. Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences. ***Transnational Studies Reader***.

In fact, the scientific interpretation of supranational identity, the new phenomenon emerging under globalization, is still in a period of search for new conceptual schemes with which it may be described. Examples of this are the studies by Anthony Smith, Charles Taylor, Jean-Marc Ferry, Terry Eagleton, Jacques Attali, etc. The publication of Charles Taylor's book *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*¹ in 1992 set the start of a discussion on the trends of change of identity, due to the fact that most states undergoing globalization are becoming increasingly incapable of solving certain problems and are transferring a number of their competences to supranational structures and organizations. Thus, new forms of identities emerge, which undermine the previous close identification with the national state. According to the theory of "fraternity", or coexperiencing of otherness, developed by Jacques Attali², fraternity is one's openness to the "other" and the only way to give meaning to oneself. In this connection, an important aspect of the scholarly debate on national identity is the notion of *others-for-us*, constructed in the course of interaction.

Thus, the evolution of the approaches to the conceptualization of identity in fact reflects the ongoing changes in identity itself, ensuing in response to changes in society; identity is no long perceived as given once and for all, but as something mobile, dynamic, as a changing relation to the various normative and value systems, and as referring to affiliation to different communities; here, the commencing processes of supranational identity formation come increasingly to the fore.

Bulgarian national identity and current processes of Eurointegration

Bulgarian national identity was built during many and various periods of history, with various interruptions; it has united several ethnic communities through commonly accepted values and goals, albeit subject to separate interpretations by the different communities. This means it has a fundamental advantage derived in the course of historical development and is particularly adequate for the modern age: it opens a space for the coexistence of people who are different, it establishes multiculturalism and sets models of integration and differentiation. This is a "soft, flexible, plastic national identity, always open to the imperatives of social time"³. Regardless of the various social-economic, political, and other, tensions, Bulgarian society's integration into Europe goes on without any serious resistance, maintaining a sufficient degree of consensus and coherence. One of the reasons of this is that the historically shaped idea, understanding, of national identity has for its basic principle the compatibility, the coexistence of differences. Here lies the specificity and vitality of Bulgarian national identity and the Bulgarian ethnic model. Underlying them is the ability to live with the other, to combine various cultural patterns, to unite different specific domestic rituals and practices. The openness of ethnic communities, and respectively of their identities, is what allows the rapid overcoming of negative attitudes and relations. A continuation of these processes is the ongoing transformation of ethnic and national identity in Bulgaria towards a more universal and supranational European identity, adequately situated with respect to the current events. Naturally, negative examples are not lacking within these trends, but as the Bulgarian ethnic model is the result of centuries of close communication between different ethnic communities, the destructive elements are brought down to a minimum. In Jacques Attali's words, today we

¹ Taylor, Ch. et al. 1994. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton University Press.

² Attali, J. 1999. *Fraternités. Une nouvelle utopie*. Fayard.

³ Nedelcheva, T. 2004 *Cultural Identity*. Sofia, Valentin Trayanov Pbls. (in Bulgarian) (Неделчева, Т. 2004. *Културната идентичност*. София, Издателство „Валентин Траянов“)

are at the threshold of a European identity in terms of a modest everyday life and an enormous ideal¹.

The connection with Europe is present as a dimension of national identity in the “traditional” self-identification of Bulgarian citizens. More than a decade after Bulgaria’s accession to the European Union, under the influence of various international and national, socio-economic, cultural, demographic, educational, etc., factors, the feeling of Bulgarian citizens that they are part of Europe has undergone changes to a lesser or greater degree. Our country has become part of the European community in many aspects, ranging from the translation of European legislation into the national laws, the inclusion in the common policies and programs of the EU, the automatic obtainment of European citizenship, the work of European institutions on the territory of Bulgaria, the access to various European legal and financial instruments in all social spheres, the mobility of Bulgarian citizens within the EU countries and the Schengen space, and down to the adoption of EU symbols in everyday life and festive culture (the flag, the hymn, the Day of Europe, etc.). All this determines changes in national self-consciousness and self-identification. While identity is a conscious self-reference to a structured system of norms and values that includes the basic attributes of the respective community, the occurring changes in the self-reference of Bulgarian citizens to Europe not only geographically but also in the value and normative aspect entails changes in national identity leading to the formation of some elements of a supranational European identity. To what degree these elements have taken shape, and what structural changes take place in the national identity of Bulgarian citizens, I will try to show through the findings of a nationally representative social survey on Bulgaria in which I took part. The study was conducted in 2018 under the project Measures for Overcoming the Demographic Crisis in the Republic of Bulgaria, which the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria requested the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to conduct. This was a representative sample survey on 1,272 Bulgarian citizens aged 18-65 years. Through the survey results, I will try to indicate where Bulgarian citizens seek their identity along the axis *local-national-supranational*, and whether the permeability of state borders amounts to permeability of the borders of identity. Here, I should note that, due to the very wide range of topics the survey had to cover, only four questions in the questionnaire touched on the topic of national identity; whereas a comprehensive and exhaustive study of representations regarding national identity would require a separate study. Hence, it will not be possible here to offer an integral analysis of the processes and changes going on in the sphere of national identity of Bulgarian citizens. Instead, I will discuss a few individual indicators (components) of the changes occurring there. We should add that, due to the lack of respondents’ ethnic self-identification in the questionnaire, it will not be possible to draw conclusions regarding the ethnic-based determination and specificity of the changes taking place in national identity.

Here is how the surveyed persons answered the question, “What is it that gives you the feeling you belong to the Bulgarian nation?”:

1. The Bulgarian language – indicated by 57.0% of respondents;
2. The national history – indicated by 54.0% of respondents;
3. The national cultural traditions and customs – indicated by 51.8% of respondents;
4. The national memory – indicated by 38.9% of respondents;
5. The state symbols (flag, state seal, national hymn) – indicated by 21.7% of respondents;
6. The Bulgarian name – indicated by 18.0% of respondents;

¹ Attali, J. 1999. Fraternités. Une nouvelle utopie. Fayard.

7. The Orthodox Christian religion – indicated by 12.8% of respondents;
8. National achievements (in sports, culture, the economy) – indicated by 11.0% of respondents;
9. The model of ethnic interrelations in Bulgaria – indicated by 7.0% of respondents;
10. Government institutions and legal order – indicated by 3.2% of respondents;
11. I have no feeling of belonging to the Bulgarian nation – indicated by 3.0% of respondents¹.

The obtained results outline a structure of indicators of national identity in which standing in the foremost positions are *the Bulgarian language, the national history, national cultural traditions and customs* and *the national memory*; the largest shares of respondents agree these elements build a feeling of national affiliation. The chosen indicators in fact illustrate the connection between national identity and the basic attributes of the national state, such as the official language, official history, etc. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the *state symbols (flag, seal, hymn)*, taken together, stand quite high in the rank of indicators of national affiliation, and are pointed out by one fifth of the surveyed persons as elements that shape the feeling of belonging to the nation. The *Bulgarian name* and *the Orthodox religion* are of lesser importance as indicators of national identity, most probably because the respondents view them as indicators of ethnic, rather than national, identity. Most probably, this is also the reason why the *model of ethnic interrelations in Bulgaria* occupies the penultimate place in the structure of national identity indicators the surveyed persons pointed out. And the fact that *government institutions and the legal order* are placed last in rank in the structure of national identity indicators suggests this is a first sign of the weakening role of the state, a first sign that the state is beginning to lose its importance for the constituting of identity, due to the changing understanding and notion of national community. This is a shift from defining the nation based on territory, state borders, institutions and legal order, to defining it primarily by cultural specificity and uniqueness. It may be said that national identity, understood as identification with a certain national state based on state borders, institutions and legal order, is beginning to lose its importance for the self-identification of Bulgarian citizens, but retains its importance when understood as culture, history, memory: it has a cultural rather than institutional content. Yet overall, the fact that the percentage of Bulgarian citizens who say they have no feeling of belonging to the Bulgarian nation is at the level of statistical error shows that national identity continues to be the leading identity in the self-definition of people at this stage of development of our society.

This is confirmed by the answers to the question “Which of the following designations do you prefer to identify with?”. The answers are as follows:

- A citizen of Bulgaria – that is how 52.5% of respondents define themselves;
- A citizen of the world – pointed out by 17.1% of respondents;
- A European (citizen of the EU) – 12.7% of respondents;
- I identify with the part of the country where I was born (native place) – 8.9% of respondents;
- I identify myself with my ethnic group – 3.3% of respondents.

Evidently, identification with the national state is foremost for Bulgarian citizens: more than half the respondents define themselves as *citizens of Bulgaria*. Although the identification with *citizen of the world* proves more important for Bulgarian citizens than the identity of a *European*, the fact that a total of 29.8% (nearly one third of respondents) identify with

¹ Here the total sum of percentages exceeds 100 as the respondents indicated more than one answer.

supranational structures illustrates the beginning process of the formation of a supranational identity. The identification of approximately one tenth of respondents with their *native place* reflects the opposite trend: the formation of local identities. Identification with the ethnos is negligible, being at a level that is nearly within the limits of statistical error.

Thus, we may conclude that, although there are signs of erosion, of undermining, of the importance of national identity, and an evident formation of elements of supranational identity (European and citizen of the world), along with indications of the formation of local identities, the national identity continues to be defining and of prime importance for the self-identification of Bulgarian citizens at this stage – identity understood primarily in terms of shared cultural values, norms, practices, history and memory; that is, as defined by culture rather than institutions.

The attitude towards “otherness” in Bulgarian society

The formation of a supranational identity implies the acceptance of otherness, the co-experiencing of otherness. As we pointed out, Bulgaria is a multiethnic state, and the notion of national identity formed in the course of history here is mainly based on the principle of the compatibility, the coexistence of differences. The interpretation of national identity creates a space for those who are different, and offers models for integration and differentiation that facilitate the transition to a supranational identity. These basic principles of interaction between ethnic groups in Bulgaria are typical for the ethnic communities that compose society; having lived together for centuries, they know one another well and do not perceive one another as “different”, are not “strangers” to one another. But how far do these attitudes extend to the “new others”, the refugees/migrants crossing the Bulgarian borders in recent years and, in some cases, staying for longer or shorter periods of time in the country (albeit as an stage on their way to Western Europe, and very rarely as a final destination)?¹ I will try to answer this question, and to present the attitude of Bulgarian citizens to the “new strangers”, the “new others” (whom they encounter ever more frequently in their daily life and in public places), based, again, on data from the national social survey conducted in the framework of the project Measures for Overcoming the Demographic Crisis in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attitudes are growing throughout all Europe, and the new European populist speech declares national identities to be menaced by the constant inflow of refugees and economic migrants – speaking thus, populists only stimulate the growth of nationalist trends. In this situation, the findings of our survey enable us to trace the prevailing and typical attitudes of the Bulgarian population towards refugees/migrants. It should be noted once again, that, due to the large range of topics the survey had to cover (mainly related to overcoming the demographic crisis in Bulgaria), only two questions concerning the attitudes of the population towards refugees/migrants were included in the study: “In your opinion, should Bulgaria accept refugees?” and “Do you believe the permanent settlement of refugees would be useful for the country in the long run?” Hence, it is impossible to make a detailed analysis of the attitudes of Bulgarian citizens towards refugees/migrants, or the various aspects of this attitude. Nevertheless, the answers to the two questions give a sufficiently clear idea as to the nature of the attitudes.

Here is the distribution of answers to the first question, “*Should Bulgaria accept refugees?*” In the positive range of the scale of responses, only 31.6% of respondents indicate

¹ Until 2017, the term *refugee* was predominantly used in public space, but it was gradually replaced by the term *immigrant* or, more generally, *migrant*.

they believe Bulgaria should accept refugees. The reasons for these positive responses are the following:

- because we have obligations under European and international legislation – 7.9%;
- because people in need should be helped – 22.1%;
- because we need workers – 1.6%.

Evidently, the motives for the positive attitude to the acceptance of refugees in Bulgaria are primarily psychological, related to empathy towards people in trouble. Some of the respondents support this opinion by referring to the obligations the country has under European and international legislation. However, the respondents clearly do not look upon the refugees as a possible resource for the Bulgarian labor market – only 1.6% (a figure which is below the threshold of statistical significance, and hence negligible) have indicated that the country needs them as a workforce.

The answers of most respondents (64.1%) are located in the negative part of the scale: Bulgaria should not accept refugees. The motives for this stance are the following:

- because the state does not have the economic possibilities to cover the cost of their support – 20.9%;
- because some among them might be a threat to the country's national security – 20.7%;
- because civil conflicts might arise in the settlements where they are accommodated – 13.5%;
- because their culture is too different from ours – 9.0%.

There are two equally important motives for respondents to reject the idea of Bulgaria accepting refugees: the state does not have the economic possibility to meet the costs of their support; and that some among them might be a threat to national security. These are the greatest fears of Bulgarian citizens concerning refugees: that these might use the economic resource of the state and thereby put at risk the country's social security system, and that the refugees are a source of risk of terrorism. The third most important motive among those who reject the acceptance of refugees is the danger of civic conflicts occurring in the settlements where refugees are housed; cultural differences between the refugees and the local population come in last place; this means that the Bulgarian citizens' leading motive for rejecting refugees is not so much that they are strangers and different, i.e., not so much the threat to national identity they might represent, but the much more pragmatic consideration: fear of loss of socio-economic rights and security due to the presence of the refugees.

The people who point out reasons to be against the acceptance of refugees are twice as many as those who support acceptance. The answers as to whether Bulgaria should accept refugees accords with the answers to the next question, "*Do you believe the permanent settlement of refugees would be useful for the country in the long run?*"

Approximately the same share as those who are against the acceptance of refugees share the opinion that the permanent settlement of refugees in our country would be of no benefit – 68.8%.

Those who, on the contrary, indicate the settlement of refugees would be useful for the country are only one fourth of the interviewed population (25.3%). The reasons they indicate are the following:

- the settlement of refugees would have a positive effect for the country's economic development – 9.1%;
- the settlement of refugees would contribute to reducing the demographic crisis in our country – 6.5%;

➤ the settlement of refugees would stimulate cultural variety and would enrich the national culture – 5.2%;

➤ the settlement of refugees would enhance inter-state contacts with the countries of origin – 4.5%.

We see a minimal number of Bulgarian citizens view these foreigners as a source of cultural variety; i.e., the cultural difference is not a leading cause for their acceptance or rejection; as I pointed out, the motives are much more pragmatic. However, the cultural difference is very often used by Bulgarian citizens to justify and legitimize the social distances towards refugees. Although most Bulgarian citizens have no direct contact with the “new others”, they consider them through various traditional stereotypes, through modern orientalisms (Edward Said¹), and thereby build representations that, in their minds, legitimate and justify rejection.

The results of the focus group discussions conducted (along with the national survey) under the project indicate that the most negative attitudes are shown by that part of the population that lives in ethnically homogenous regions, where the local residents have no experience in contact with the “other” and “different” from them and where they also have never had contact with refugees, which increases their fears and negative attitudes. Due to this lack of direct contact, the attitudes of the local population is formed under the influence of the media, which create a generally negative representation of refugees. But media information is not the only reason for rejection of refugees/migrants. Additionally, the media information has succeeded in forming certain representations that legitimate and justify this rejection in people’s minds. The representations are related to cultural differences, to differences between the way of life and the culture of Bulgarians and the refugees – differences that determine the impossibility of living together.

“In my opinion, they live in a completely different way than the Bulgarians... They have different understandings, which are unacceptable for us. They are of a different faith, from another continent.” (participant in focus group discussion in the village of Hotnitsa).

Attitudes are considerably more positive in ethnically mixed regions, where the local population has had long years of experience of contacts with people of a different religion and ethnicity, and moreover has already had contacts with refugees. The focus group results in regions where the population has direct contact with refugees shows that this contact, the gradual familiarization with refugees in the course of social interchange, leads to reduction, and even complete surmounting, of negative attitudes.

“The initial fear is fear of the unknown. We being people who have had contacts with them, they don’t scare us anymore. Lack of knowledge and the unknown are a problem. Familiarity is the basis of everything.” (focus group participant in the city of Harmanli).

“A person hates and fears what he is not familiar with. Once you get to know it, it is not frightening anymore... When you get to know the unknown, you understand that, though it is strange and different, it is basically the same as with us.” (focus group participant in the city of Nova Zagora).

The lack of familiarity and experience in interaction is what determines the different attitudes toward the other – when the other is “other, but one of ours” as opposed to “the other who is a stranger”.

For the sake of comparison, we present the attitudes towards the local ethnic communities, and towards the refugees/migrants, among the local population in a small town

¹ Said, E. 1979. Orientalism. Vintage.

in Bulgaria (Vetovo), located in an ethnically mixed region where several ethnic communities have coexisted for centuries. The data are from a social survey I conducted in 2016, representative for the town.

Opinions of Bulgarians

Are you willing to live in the same settlement with:		
Turks	Roma	Refugees
91.7%	41.7%	16.7%
Are you willing to live in the same state with:		
Turks	Roma	Refugees
91.7%	41.7%	33.3%

Opinions of Turks

Are you willing to live in the same settlement with:		
Bulgarians	Roma	Refugees
75%	33.3%	25%
Are you willing to live in the same state with:		
Bulgarians	Roma	Refugees
83.3%	41.7%	33.3%

Opinions of the Roma

Are you willing to live in the same settlement with:		
Bulgarians	Turks	Refugees
100%	95%	40%
Are you willing to live in the same state with:		
Bulgarians	Turks	Refugees
100%	100%	60%

We see that the local ethnic communities' inclination to accept, and coexist with, one another is multiple times stronger than as regards refugees. Perceptible behind this attitude is the fear of the unknown.

Perhaps the most convincing proof of the importance of cultural difference and knowledge of the other for a better understanding and easier acceptance is contained in the words of an interviewed woman from the city of Veliko Tarnovo, who is a teacher at the local university and a translator from Arabic. She explains how lack of knowledge of certain cultural norms and values becomes a precondition for social distance and rejection.

“Bulgarians often ask themselves the question why there are young men and boys among the migrants/refugees, and why, if these people love their native land, they have not remained there to fight for it, to take part in the war, but are instead fleeing and looking for salvation in Europe. They would accept it if women and children were fleeing from the war, and would help them, but they cannot accept that young men, who should be defending their country, are fleeing. Here lies a basic ignorance of Arabic culture. In it, the man, the young male, is the most important one, because they rely on him to continue the family line, so when there is a danger, the young men are the first to save themselves.” (interview with a woman teacher in the University of Veliko Tarnovo).

We see that the lack of familiarity with the cultural norms and values of others becomes a precondition for translating one's own ideas about patriotism and love of the native land to other people, who are in fact guided by completely different values and norms; this becomes a

cause of rejecting and displaying social distance. The short way to accepting the other is by getting to know and understand him.

It has become obvious that, today, the others, those who are different, the strangers, are crossing geographical, historical and cultural borders and coming increasingly close to us. To use Bauman's words¹ again, "once a temporary irritant, today strangeness has become a permanent condition". This means that one of the basic problems of contemporary, postmodern society – upon which its future form of development and existence largely depends – is how to learn to live in the constant company of "strangers" under conditions of indeterminateness and insecurity. Here, there are two possibilities: to continue to keep away from them and build fences, in referring to the possible loss of national identity and holding high the ideas of nationalism, or to allow them to come near us and try to carry the other within ourselves, to be tolerant to others, and try to make them at least a little bit closer and more familiar. The survey results, however, show that in Bulgaria, attitudes towards refugees/migrants are prevailing negative. On the other hand, we find that the main reason why Bulgarian citizens reject refugees/migrants is not the latter's strangeness, not their cultural difference, but rather economic considerations and the fear of loss of economic and national security. Surmounting this problem is the way to surmount the negative attitudes towards people who are different from us, and who, it appears, we reject not because they are different but because we fear for what we might lose by their presence among us. In this respect, knowledge of these people's stories, of their life histories, which society does not know, and seemingly does not want to know and hear at present, would help us start to understand them better, help us see the borderline beyond which everything human begins to break down; we must try not to cross that line.

Albena NAKOVA

**MİLLİ İDENTİKLİK VƏ "BAŞQASI" (ÖZGƏYƏ) MÜNASİBƏT.
MÜASİR BOLQAR CƏMİYYƏTİNİN İKİ SİMASI
Xülasə**

Məqalədə Bolqarıstanın yeni global intensiv mobilik dövrü, sosial proseslərin müstəsna dinamizmi və milli sərhədlərin əhəmiyyətini dəyişdirən, xalqları və mədəniyyətləri bir-birindən təcrid edən yeni bir ictimai quruluşun müstəsna dinamizmindən bəhs olunur.

Postmodern cəmiyyətdə milli dövlətin rolu və yerində baş verən dəyişikliklərə cavab olaraq, milli kimlik də təbii olaraq inkişaf edir. "Bolqarıstanda demoqrafik böhranın aradan qaldırılması yolları" layihəsi çərçivəsində aparılan sosial araşdırma, fokus qrup müzakirələri və seçmə müsahibələr nəticəsində əldə edilmiş empirik məlumatlara əsaslanaraq, məqalədə milli icma anlayışındakı dəyişiklik təhlil edilmişdir. Rəylərdə milli maraq, mədəni unikalıq və başqası ilə birgə yaşam tərzinə üstünlük verilmişdir.

Məqalənin ikinci hissəsində Bolqarıstan cəmiyyətinin "başqa"ya və ya bolqar vətəndaşlarının "yeni başqası"na münasibətləri öyrənilmiş, millətçi bir şəxsiyyətin formalaşması meyillərindən bəhs olunmuşdur. "Yeni başqaları", yəni son illərdə daha tez-tez sərhədləri keçməklə, Bolqarıstanda qalan, yaxud buradan tranzit kimi istifadə etməklə Qərbi Avropaya gedən miqrantlara münasibət ətraflı təhlil olunur.

Açar sözlər: milli kimlik, miqrasiya, başqası/özgə, münasibət, fərqliliklə birgə yaşam

¹ Bauman, Z. 1993. Postmodern Ethics. Wiley-Blackwell; 1 edition.

НАЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ И ОТНОШЕНИЕ К ДРУГОМУ (ЧУЖОМУ). ДВА ОБЛИКА СОВРЕМЕННОГО БОЛГАРСКОГО ОБЩЕСТВА

Резюме

В статье предмет обсуждения вызовы Болгарии в новый глобальный век интенсивной мобильности, исключительной динамики социальных процессов и крупномасштабных преобразований, которые меняют значение национальных границ, устраняя отгороженности народов и культур, и создавая новый социальный порядок. В ответ на преобразования, происходящие в роли и месте национального государства в постмодернистском обществе, естественно, национальная идентичность проявляет себя. Основываясь на опытных данных национального представительного социального обзора, дискуссии центральной группы и подробных интервью, проводимых по проекту «Меры преодоления демографического кризиса в Болгарии», статье анализирует как смещение в понимании национальной общины - с ценности, определенной в отношении неприкосновенного национального суверенитета, к более открывает перспективе, где сотрудничество, национальный интерес, культурная уникальность и совместный опыт различия, ставшей доминантом – приводит к изменениям национальной идентичности, в сторону формирования элементов сверхнациональной европейской идентичности, где совместный опыт различия становится центральной.

Во второй части статьи говорится об отношении болгарского общества к «различию» или как тенденции формирования сверхнациональной идентичности, которая навязывает принципы совместимости и сосуществования различий, связывается с отношениями жителей Болгарии к «новым другим», т.е. беженцам(мигрантам, которые в последние года переходят наши границы все больше, и некоторых из которых остаются в Болгарии на долгой или короткий периоды времени, хотя транзитом в Западную Европу).

Ключевые слова: национальная идентичность, миграция, другой(чужой), отношения, совместное переживании различия

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Rəyçi: AMEA Fəlsəfə İnstitutunun şöbə müdiri, f.f.d., dos. Zöhrə Əliyeva
Qəbul edilib: 19.09. 2019